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MEMORANDUM

Results of ARVN Tri Phap Operation in
Northern Military Region 4

1. A South Vietnamese field officer has reported that the ARVN 9th Division suffered few losses and captured large quantities of arms, ammunition, and rice during its recent incursion into the Tri Phap base area -- the Communists' major stronghold in northern MR 4 (see map). The Tri Phap operation, designed to disrupt the Communists' logistical apparatus serving units in Dinh Tuong Province, was launched in mid-February and tapered off in early April. Elements of the ARVN 9th Division were tasked with sweeping the southeastern part of Kien Phong Province, while units from the ARVN 7th Division, supported by the 7th Ranger Group, were assigned the southwestern corner of adjacent Kien Tuong Province. The Tri Phap area, however, also extends well into Dinh Tuong Province, where most elements of the four NVA infantry regiments in the area remained during the ARVN operation. Thus Communist resistance to ARVN forces primarily came from provincial units.

2. According to the ARVN officer, by late March the ARVN 9th Division had killed 340 Communists, and captured about 40 tons of ammunition -- mostly mortar -- and 400 individual and 80 crew-served weapons. In addition, almost 600 tons of paddy rice were either destroyed or confiscated. Although figures for losses inflicted by the ARVN 7th Division are not available, comments by the MR 4 Commander suggest that they were equally successful.

3. The 9th Division meanwhile suffered 33 ARVN killed, 240 wounded, and expended more than 20,000 rounds -- about 500 tons -- of artillery ammunition. The heavy use of artillery in the campaign apparently was made possible by the lifting of normal restrictions on the amounts of ammunition available. Reportedly, "no limits" 25X1

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[redacted]

were placed on the amounts that could be requested. In contrast, an ARVN source in the Delta reported last year that artillery units were being limited to only 100 rounds per gun for "small" engagements, reduced from an allowance of 1,000 to 3,000 rounds before the cease-fire.

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4. [redacted] ARVN considers the Tri Phap operation a major success, one that has given the South Vietnamese an increased military advantage in the northern Delta. Indeed, the losses inflicted on the Communists were significant, and combined with the disruption of supply activity in this key Communist base area could have deterred a round of NVA attacks if they were planned. Moreover, the penetration of an area controlled firmly by the Communists since 1972 provides important psychological benefits to South Vietnamese forces.

5. It is doubtful, however, that the Tri Phap operation will change the present character of the war in the Delta. The Communists did not possess the capability to sustain large-scale activity in the Delta before the ARVN sweep through Tri Phap, and despite the losses there, they will be able to continue the low level of attacks and harassments noted in recent months. Because the four NVA regiments in the area avoided major action during the Tri Phap sweep, they were not seriously weakened. In addition, although the supply lines leading into Tri Phap from the Parrot's Beak and other Cambodian border areas were cut temporarily, by early April ARVN units were beginning to withdraw from the area, partly in response to diversionary attacks elsewhere by Communist units. As a result, some resupply activity into and within the Tri Phap area probably has resumed.

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